

The President's Radio Address

May 29, 1993

Good morning. This weekend, in solemn ceremonies and joyful gatherings, families will honor the military personnel who have kept us free. In honoring these patriots we honor what is best in the American spirit.

I'll be joining those families at West Point to pay tribute to the officers graduating from the military academy, at Arlington National Cemetery to lay a wreath and pray for the fallen, and at the remarkable memorial to the men and women who died in Vietnam whose names are engraved in its polished walls and whose memories are etched in the hearts of the American people. These are the heroes who have protected our borders, defended our interests, and preserved our values.

Our military strength makes our freedom possible. But our military might depends on our economic strength. Just as our liberty cannot rest upon a hollow army, our strong military cannot rest upon a hollow economy. Our ability to remain strong abroad is founded on our ability to remain strong here at home. For too many years the people in Washington in both parties have permitted our strength to ebb. Government of gridlock and favoritism for the few has caused our economy to lose its historic promise in a time of intense global competition when we have to change and when the status quo isn't enough.

Look at the results of the last several years: middle class families working longer hours for lower wages; economic growth in this recovery slowing to historically low levels; 9 million Americans out of work in the 25th month of what is supposed to be a recovery. Thirty-five million Americans go to bed every night facing a serious illness or injury which could bankrupt their families because they have no health insurance, and many, many millions more fear losing their health insurance if they have to change jobs and they have a sick person in their family or if their company goes down.

In the midst of all of these challenges our National Government too long has given enormous tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans and special interests and, at the same time, reduced investments in areas essential

to productivity and security of working families. And in our cities, small towns, and rural areas, look what's happened. In the last 12 years the Government's debt has grown from \$1 trillion to \$4 trillion, in just 12 years. And what a burden and shackle it has become.

The American economy is in the middle of the global marketplace, challenged by nations who have made wise investments in their people, their workers, and their technological edge, and who have disciplined their own spending on other things. If we don't start getting better, we can fall behind, and the American way of life will be denied to this generation and the next. This is the great struggle of our time. And it is a challenge I am determined our country will meet, a battle we will win.

At stake is whether Washington will stop doing business as usual and put our own house in order and put our people first, whether we will be satisfied with the status quo and let the special interests continue to dictate our country's future, or whether we will expand American prosperity and preserve the American dream.

Just this week, the House of Representatives stepped up to the plate and voted for change, for growth, for renewal. The House voted for an economic program that really reduces the deficit through specific spending cuts that will lead to economic growth. They voted for 200 cuts in old spending programs, \$250 billion in deficit reduction through spending cuts alone. We also asked the wealthy to pay their fair share because they are able to pay more and because in the last 12 years taxes have gone down on the wealthy as their incomes have gone up. Of the money we raise in taxes 75 percent of it comes from individuals with incomes above \$100,000.

The plan also asks the middle class to make a modest contribution through an energy tax. In 1994, a family making \$40,000 a year will pay a dollar a month; the next year, \$7 a month; the next year \$17 a month when the energy tax is fully phased in.

Our plan for economic growth is serious about deficit reduction, by asking all but the most meagerly supplied working families and the poor to make a contribution. We reduce our deficit by \$500 billion. That puts our fiscal house in order. It pays down the deficit,

and at the same time, it does something else we have to do: we make a down payment on future economic growth, investing in the work skills, the education standards, the technologies that our people need to be able to compete and win in global markets.

This plan rewards full-time work instead of lifetime welfare. For the first time, this plan will make it possible for us to say to every American family, if you work 40 hours a week and you have children in the home, you won't be in poverty. That means that people will no longer have an incentive to prefer welfare to work. In fact, it will be the other way around.

The House of Representatives deserves our special thanks for passing our plan. Now it's time for the Senators to do the right thing as well. But unfortunately, even well-intentioned and respected legislators are still clinging to the illusions of the past, that somehow there are easy ways out of this and no-pain decisions. Then other people in the Senate would actually pay for lower taxes on the very wealthy by cutting Social Security benefits for older Americans living barely above the poverty line. And for working Americans living barely above the poverty line, they'd be denied tax benefits so there could be more to upper-income people. If we were to protect interest groups from paying their fair share of taxes by cutting the earned-income tax credit for low-income working Americans, we'd just force millions of low-wage workers back into poverty and force many into welfare.

These ideas would return us to the failed policies of the past, policies that increased our deficit, short-changed our future, and put narrow interests over national interests. But those days are over. Gridlock is out. Growth is in. It's time for the Senate to join the House and get with this program.

This is not about politics. It's about America's future, about rebuilding the foundation of our prosperity, about restoring the confidence of our people in Washington's capacity to deal with our common problems. It's about being strong nationally and about our families being secure and strong in their homes and in their lives.

We're making progress. We're turning things around. We're doing it together like

a family. On Memorial Day, let's rededicate ourselves to our Armed Services who are fighting for our national security and to our common economic future which makes that national security possible.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 1:27 p.m. on May 28 in the Wyndham Franklin Plaza Hotel in Philadelphia, PA, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 29.

Remarks at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony in West Point, New York

May 29, 1993

Thank you very much. Please be seated.

General Graves, thank you for that fine introduction and for your outstanding leadership here. General Sullivan and the distinguished platform guests, distinguished guests, all the families and guests of this graduating class, and most of all, to the young men and women of the Corps of Cadets, it is a great privilege for me today to join in this celebration of accomplishment.

To the class of 1993, I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations. You've worked hard, and you've well earned the honor bestowed upon you today.

To your parents and your relatives, let me assure you that however often you've wondered about it, you really aren't dreaming. Your sons and daughters, your brothers and sisters really made it. And you can take pride in their graduation and in the strong values that you must have helped to instill in them that made this day possible for them.

To the faculty and staff of this wonderful Academy, let me offer my gratitude for your dedication as this historic institution graduates its 50,000th cadet. It is said here at West Point that much of the history you teach was made by the people you taught. That's true and very much to your credit. The work you and your predecessors have carried forward since 1802 is truly that of nation-building, and today your Nation thanks you once again.